

Prostitution: Causes and Effects

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Throughout this class we have been learning a lot about female and male prostitution and the effects it has on young ladies and young men in the underground sex industry. We have explored how these individuals can be led into the sex industry either through their own voluntary actions or involuntary participation, and have touched base on pedophilia and child sex trafficking. A lot of what we have learned about female juvenile prostitution outside of lecture has been through the book Gangs and Girls by Michel Dorais and Partrice Corriveau. This book focuses on street gangs and their involvement in the illegal sex trade.

In most gangs, men are at the center structure of the gang and make up the inner circle and middle members (p.15). In these cases, women who participate in gang activity take on periphery or minor roles in the gangs. Some of these roles may involve being accomplices to crimes, having a relationship with a boy who is involved with a gang (the "girlfriend"), or being a prostitute. sometimes the last two are one and the same. In the case of prostitution, "street gangs use misrepresentation, blackmail, and coercion as recruitment

strategies", (p.35). In most cases, the girls end up falling prey to what the book refers to as "love bombing", where the unknowing girl's future pimp tries to make her feel special and essentially seduce her. If he succeeds, he can play on her emotions and get her to do things for him- eventually leading to things such as selling herself because he "suddenly went broke". After that, they're able to either blackmail the girls into sticking around, or use violence to keep them in line. Some other tactics involve coercing a girl already involved in the sex trade to recruit her friends.

The types of girls that typically wind up in roles of prostitution are referred to by the book as sex slaves, submissives, daredevils, and independents (p.56). The most common form of prostitute is the submissive, which is a woman who voluntarily involves herself in prostitution and involves herself in the sex trade because of someone else telling her to (typically a gang, or a "boyfriend"). The book states that unfortunately some of these submissives wind up unable to get away from their abusers, and wind up as a sex slave- a woman who is bought and sold and has her fate entirely out of her hands- unable to make any decisions on her own. A lot of these women, both submissives and sex slaves end up dealing with

drug addictions either because they need to get away, or their pimps feel it's an effective way to control them, (p.51).

Daredevils are women who usually enter the trade later in life thinking that they are in control of the situation or know what to expect of prostitution; they're essentially in it for the thrill, and they think they are a special exception that can't be controlled by a gang. What's bad about this is that their freedoms are typically earned doing other illegal activities for the gang, which the gang can then in turn use to blackmail her to keep her in line and continue working for them. A lot of girls who have the highest amount of freedom act as independents. These are girls who go into prostitution voluntarily mostly for the money, and typically retain anonymity. Because of their good looks are able to float from gang to gang and keep most of their own money. These women tend to be what we think of when we think of "glamorous" prostitution, where these women have money and supposed freedom.

A lot of these women are afraid to leave the industry or testify against their pimps because of the violence that may occur to them if their pimp ever gets out, or manages to inform his gang of the woman's "betrayal", (p.86). Another

factor is that a lot of these women are not treated as trauma victims, which makes it harder for them to testify since they are often made to be witnesses and relive the horrors they experienced while acting as prostitutes (p.88). Further still, some of these girls fall in love with their pimp, or experience what is known as stockholm syndrome, in which the girl falls in love with her captors (p.89). As such, many often remain in the trade or are unable to get away from their abusers since their abusers never get arrested for their actions.

The after effects of prostitution range from emotional trauma, to physical trauma. Some of these women experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and have nightmares about past experiences of rape and abuse. Some never recover their self-esteem, resulting in an inability to get away from their pimp or winding up going back to them even if they manage to get away. In addition, many of these women don't know how to get away or break the cycle, and end up recruiting others in order to maintain some level of freedom. The physical trauma may be anything from any manner of diseases collected due to the lack of protection utilized with clients, as well as injuries from beatings and rape.

In conclusion, a lot of women wind up in the sex trade due to manipulation from gangs, as well as for excitement or money. While most women wind up in submissive roles where the gang can control them, some women maintain independence because of good looks (although this can be short lived if the gang can exploit a weakness in the girl and find a way to control her). Many women cannot leave the industry because of a fear of being beaten/raped/killed, a lack of self-esteem, or some dependence (a need for money or drugs). In the cases of women who do get away, the after effects of prostitution can last a lifetime, from diseases to symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder.